DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 442 164 CS 510 353

AUTHOR	Waterfall, Milde M.
TITLE	"Children of the Sun" by N. Scott Momaday. Cue Sheet.
INSTITUTION	John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY	Department of Education, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1997-00-00
NOTE	14p.; Additional funding provided by The Kennedy Center Corporate Fund and The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation.
AVAILABLE FROM	http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/cuesheet/theater.html.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom - Learner (051)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*American Indian Culture; *American Indian History; *American Indian Literature; Audiences; Cultural Activities; Elementary Secondary Education; Production Techniques; *Theater Arts
IDENTIFIERS	*Drama in Education; Kiowa (Tribe)

ABSTRACT

This performance guide is designed for teachers to use with students before and after a performance of "Children of the Sun," by N. Scott Momaday. The guide, called a "Cuesheet," is in the form of a Director's Notebook--a scrapbook/journal of clippings, memos, lists, illustrations, notes, and other items--to show students how a director finds and develops ideas to make a playwright's script come to life on stage. The Cuesheet contains 10 sheets for use in class, addressing: (1) The Kiowa (offering background information about the geography and history of the Kiowa, known as the children of the sun god); (2) The Story (presenting a summary of the play, which is based on sacred stories of the Kiowa); (3) Playwright and Composer (with biographies of each and a list of books or recordings by them); (4) Notes to the Cast (offering some lines from the script and a discussion of foreshadowing and anachronisms); (5) Set Design (looking at the role of set design, props, and lighting in telling the story and experiencing its magic and mystery); (6) Costume Design (including some preliminary costume sketches and examining how actors "double" parts and how costumes help express character); and (7) The Audience (discussing the audience's role in live theatre). (SR)

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"Children of the Sun" by N. Scott Momaday. Cue Sheet.

by Milde M. Waterfall

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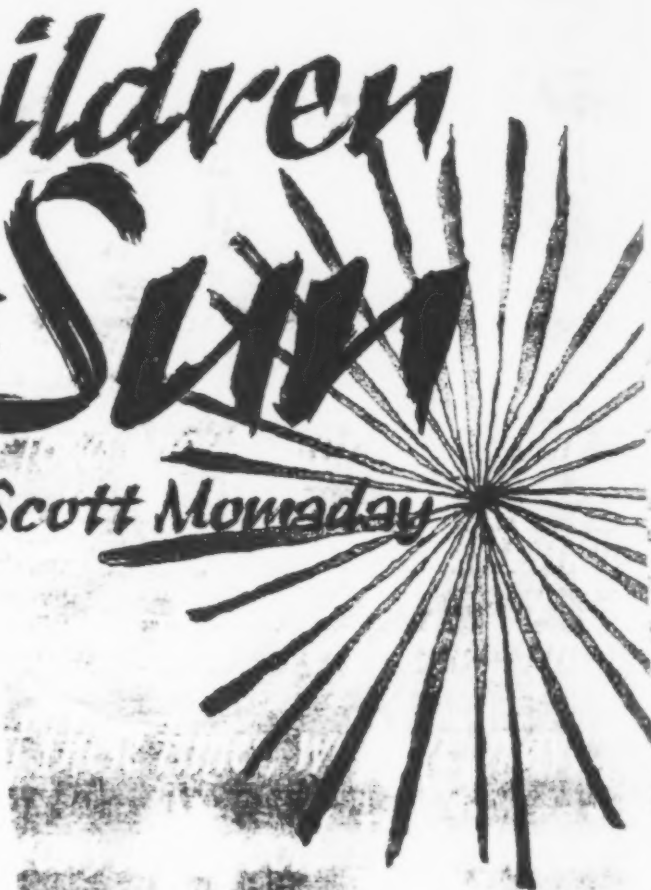
CUE SHEET

WELCOME TO CUESHEET, one of a series of performance guides published by the Education Department of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C. *Cuesheet* is designed to help you enjoy the play *Children of the Sun*, performed March 4–20, 1997.

Children of the Sun

by N. Scott Momaday



From The Director

I am sharing my Director's notebook—a scrapbook/journal of clippings, memos, lists, illustrations, notes, and other items—so you may see how a director finds and develops ideas to make a playwright's script come to life on stage.

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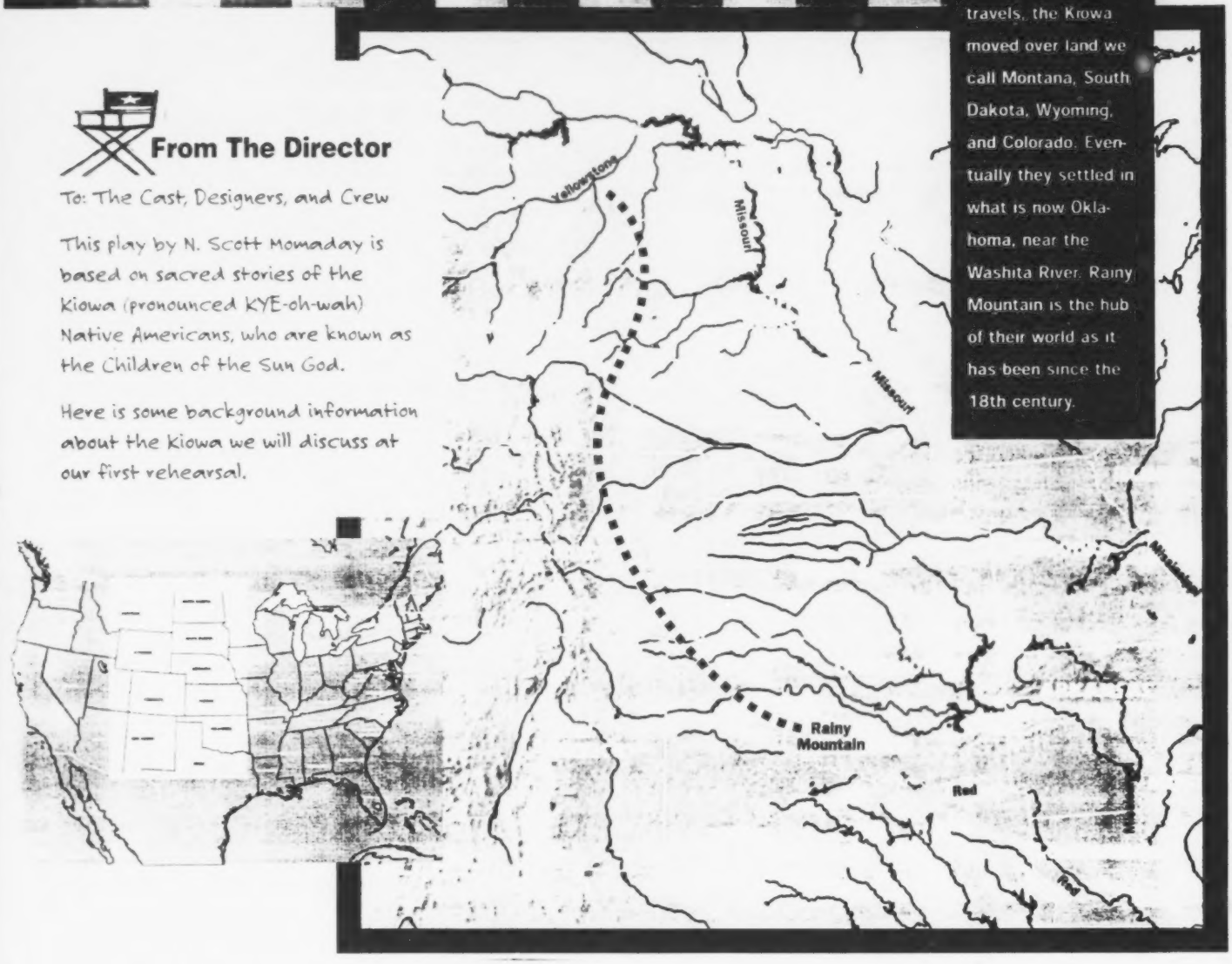
2: The Kiowa

From The Director

To: The Cast, Designers, and Crew

This play by N. Scott Momaday is based on sacred stories of the Kiowa (pronounced KYE-oh-wah) Native Americans, who are known as the Children of the Sun God.

Here is some background information about the Kiowa we will discuss at our first rehearsal.



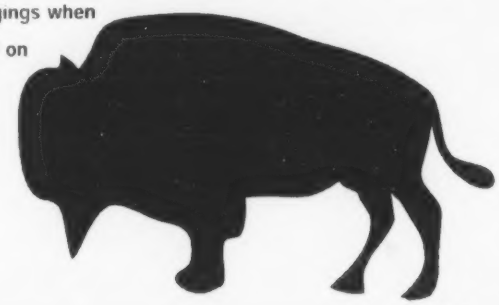
In their nomadic travels, the Kiowa moved over land we call Montana, South Dakota, Wyoming, and Colorado. Eventually they settled in what is now Oklahoma, near the Washita River. Rainy Mountain is the hub of their world as it has been since the 18th century.

17th Century

The Kiowa lived in what is now called Montana. They were skilled nomadic hunters who made excellent arrows, bows, and spears. They relied on dogs to help transport their belongings when they moved on to better hunting grounds.

1840

Millions of buffalo roamed free on the Great Plains. The buffalo hunt was important to the Kiowa, who honored the animal's spirit and used all of its parts for their survival.



1860

The government took lands of Native Americans and gave them to settlers and owners of railroads.

1872-74

A new method for producing superior leather from buffalo hides created a sudden demand for them. High prices for hides resulted in the slaughter of almost 4 million buffalo by white hunters. The loss of so many buffalo destroyed the Kiowa's food supply and way of life. The U.S. government forced the Kiowa to live on reservations—land set aside for them. Facing starvation, the Kiowa raided nearby settlements and Army posts for food and supplies.

1874

To prevent the Kiowa and other Native Americans from conducting more raids, U.S. soldiers shot 10,000 of their horses.

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"A long time ago this land belonged to our fathers; but when I go up to the river I see camps of soldiers on its banks. These soldiers cut down my timber; they kill my buffalo; when I see that, my heart feels like bursting. ....This is our country. We have always lived in it. We always had plenty to eat because the land was full of buffalo. We were happy.... When you came...we had to protect ourselves...we had to save our country."

–Satanta, also known as White Bear, Kiowa Chief, 1867

Satanta

1887

For the last time, the Kiowa celebrated the Sun Dance, a sacred ceremony performed to ensure the well-being of the tribe, to celebrate young men's journeys into manhood, and to renew the tribe's harmonious relationship with the natural world.

1894

After years of hardship, the Kiowa survived on reservations by building homes, raising livestock, developing small farms, and establishing schools.

1924

The Kiowa, along with other Native Americans, were declared United States citizens by Congress.

1925–present

The Kiowa revived old traditions in order to share pride in their heritage.

1930–1950

Many Kiowa moved from the reservation in Oklahoma to neighboring states.

1960–present

The Kiowa, like other Native Americans, are claiming their civil rights. "Self-determination," by which Native Americans decide how they will use natural resources on reservations and make other decisions for themselves, has become important.

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4 The Story

From The Director

To: Cast, Designers, and Crew

Here is a summary of Children of the Sun. As you read it notice that the story is a series of shorter stories.

Characters: Aila, Grandmother Spider, The Sun, Twin Boys

A baby girl, Aila, is born into the Kiowa tribe. One day her cradle is placed on a tree branch. A bird alights on the tree. The baby wriggles out of her **cradleboard** and climbs toward the bird. The tree grows into the clouds, taking the baby and the bird into another world. Magically, the baby is now a young woman. Aila gives the world a gift—she brings colors where before there had been only black, white, and gray.

Aila meets a handsome young man who is the Sun. She becomes his wife. Soon they have a son.

Time passes. Aila misses her parents in the other world. The Sun warns Aila that she must never touch a certain **bush** which grows nearby. But she disobeys. One day while the Sun is away, Aila tears the bush from the ground, looks into the hole and sees her family in the other world. She makes a rope, puts her baby son in a cradleboard on her back, and climbs down to join her parents.

The Sun returns. He looks into the hole and sees Aila climbing down. In rage he throws a **gaming wheel** at Aila. It strikes and kills her, but her son is safe. Grandmother Spider finds the boy and raises him.

Grandmother Spider warns the boy not to throw the gaming wheel into the sky, but the boy disobeys. The wheel falls back, striking the boy and cutting him into Twins.

The Twins live with Grandmother Spider. One day they proudly show Grandmother Spider a snake they have found and killed. In horror, Grandmother Spider explains that just as she is Grandmother of the Kiowa,

Cradleboards were used by Native American women to carry infants on their backs. They were made from rawhide, blankets, and a board.

The Bush Aila removes is known in the play as "pomme blanche" (pronounced PUM blaush), a French name that means "white apple."

A gaming wheel is a hoop made out of wood and laced across the opening with sinews and rawhide strings. A small space in the center of the hoop is left open. The wheel is thrown into the air for archers to shoot at. As part of boys' training to become warriors, a gaming wheel is rolled on the ground as a moving target for their arrows and spears.

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PHOTO COURTESY NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

the Snake was their wise Grandfather. Grandmother Spider explains that the Twins must now be the Grandfathers upon whom the Kiowa will depend.

The Twins live through good times and bad times. They become heroes who are brave, steadfast, generous, and good.

One hard winter, the Twins are tested. There are no buffalo to hunt for food; the people are starving. Oddly, the Twins find fresh meat outside their teepee. One Twin is suspicious and questions where the meat came from. The other Twin, thinking only of his hunger, eats the meat. He is punished. When he swallows the meat, he is transformed into a beast and disappears into the water, never to be heard from again.

Later, the remaining Twin performs many remarkable feats. One day, as the Twin makes arrows in his teepee, he becomes aware that there is a stranger outside. The Twin cleverly discovers that the stranger is an enemy and kills him with an arrow.

The Twin becomes an old man. Before he dies, the Twin divides himself into ten **medicine bundles,** known as Talyi-dai (pronounced tahl-YEE-die). He gives the bundles to the Kiowa to bring them success in war and hunting, healing powers, and long life.

Transformation—a change

In Children of the Sun there are many transformations.

—Aila changes from a child, to a woman, to the moon

—A bird changes to the Sun

—One boy changes to Twins

—One Twin changes into a water beast

—The other Twin is transformed into ten medicine bundles

Medicine bundles are collections of beads, bones, stones, and feathers wrapped in skin or cloth. Each object has a special meaning related to ancient myths and legends. Medicine bundles are believed to have special powers that keep their owners and the tribe, safe from harm or bring good luck. As a result they are treasured in families and are handed down from father to son.

Kiowa camp, 1892

PHOTO BY IRWIN CHILKAWA SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION NATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARCHIVES

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6 Playwright and Composer

From The Director

To: The Stage Manager

Here are biographies of the playwright and composer we can use in the program for Children of the Sun.

N. Scott Momaday, Playwright

N. Scott Momaday is a novelist, poet, painter, playwright, storyteller, and teacher. He says that his people, the Kiowa, and their stories, influence his work. He has been called "the man made of words." His life is filled with words—reading and writing, talking, telling stories, listening, remembering, and thinking. Momaday describes thinking as talking to oneself. In 1969 he won the **Pulitzer Prize** for his novel *House Made of Dawn*.

Books:

Momaday, N. Scott. *In the Presence of the Sun*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.

Momaday, N. Scott. *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1969.

t Momaday

Pulitzer Prize—An important award given each year to honor achievement in journalism, literature, drama, and music. Some other writers who have received the prize for literature are Thornton Wilder, Pearl S. Buck, John Steinbeck, Ernest Hemingway, and Toni Morrison.

R. Carlos Nakai, Composer

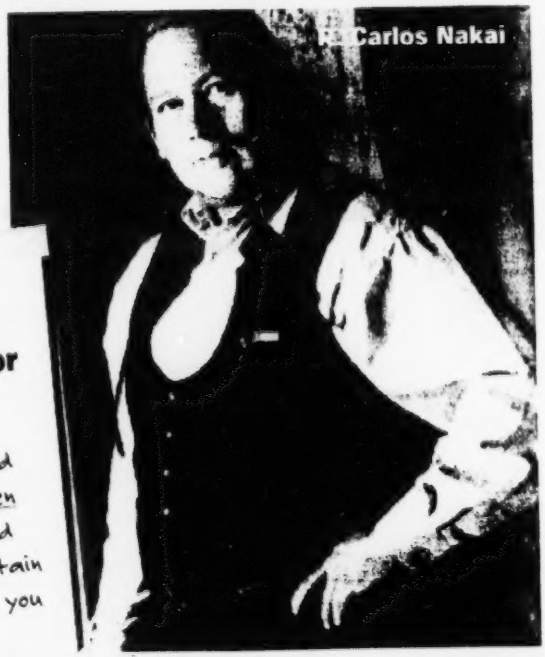
Musician and composer, R. Carlos Nakai is of Navajo/Ute heritage. He plays the traditional thirteen-note cedar flute of the Plains and Great Lakes peoples. Nakai studies the culture and music of Native Americans, composes and performs new music for the Native American flute, and teaches about Native American cultures.

Selected Recordings:

Nakai, R. Carlos. *Emergence*, Canyon Records, 1992.

Nakai, R. Carlos and William Eaton. *Ancestral Voices*, Canyon Records, 1992.

Nakai, R. Carlos, William Eaton, and Will Clipman. *Feather, Stone & Light*. Canyon Records, 1995.



R. Carlos Nakai

From The Director

To: The Composer

I'm delighted that you've agreed to compose the music for Children of the Sun. We need sacred and mysterious music to set and sustain the mood. What instruments do you think are most appropriate?

MOMADAY: KATE RAUDENBUSH

NAKAI: JOHN RUNNING

Kiowa man and woman, 1904

Wooden Lance, 1894

From The Director

To: Cast
At our next rehearsal we'll discuss the following lines from the script to see how they foreshadow events in the story. The lines are ones we especially want the audience to hear and remember.

Foreshadow—to indicate or suggest something before it happens.

"The Sun will do her such good."

"Do you see that bush over there, the low, drab, shaggy one? It is a special thing, a pomme blanche. Be very careful. Do not touch it. Never, never touch it."

"The gaming wheel, whatever you do, you must never, never throw it up into the air."

"I believe we had better not eat of this meat."

We should also discuss some anachronisms the playwright has included in the script:

Anachronism—anything that seems to be out of its proper time in history—objects, people, language, etc.

"Well, this is a kind of yuckiness, isn't it? I mean, lovey-dovey, sweetsie-neatsie, cutesie, tootsie. Eck!"

"House rules. No smoking. When you go to the fridge, no drinking straight from the milk and juice bottles. No dirty socks left in the hall."

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8 Set Design

From The Director

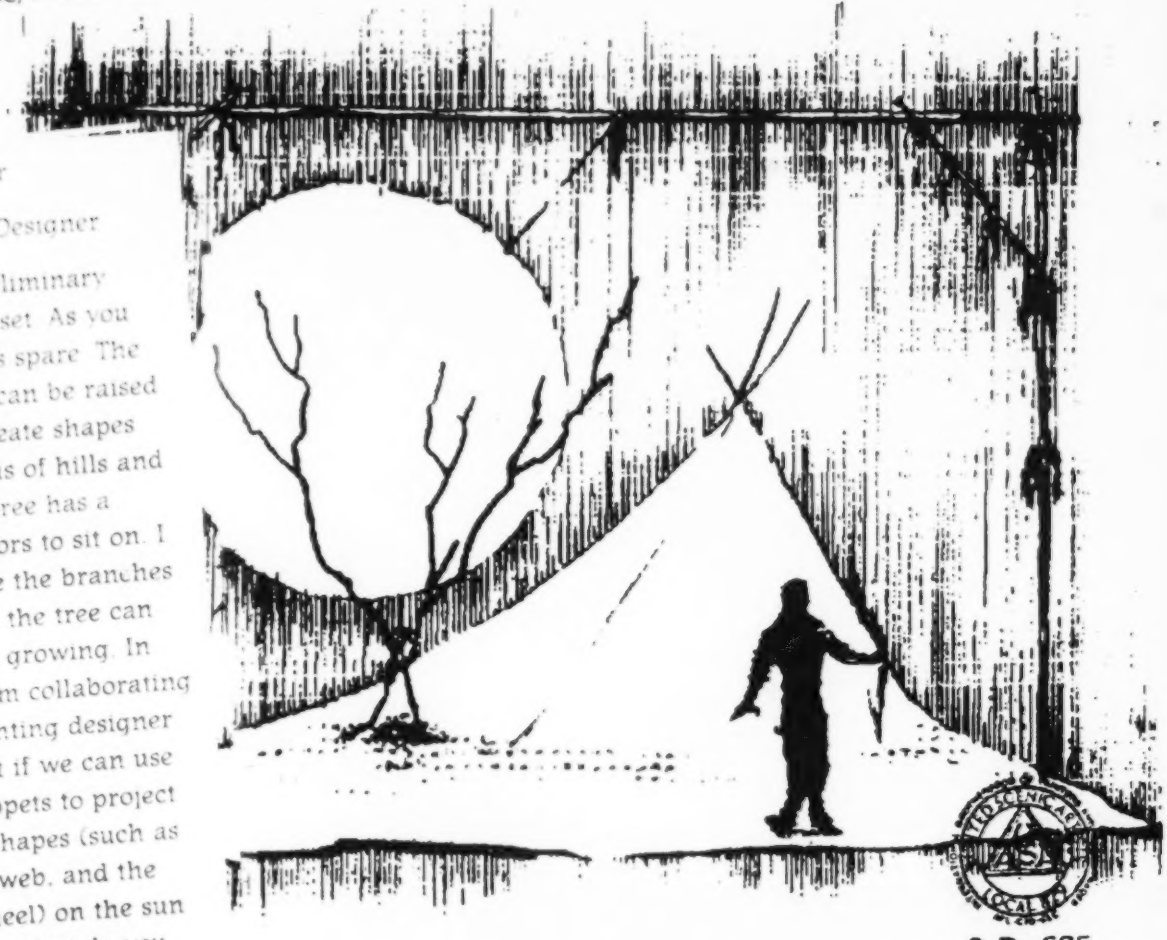
To: The Designers
Children of the Sun is based on myth, ancient stories people tell to explain mysteries of nature. Although myths include careful observations of nature, their explanations are imaginative. In Children of the Sun, people move from one world to another, magically change from babies to adults and from humans to animals. The Sun takes on a human form. Our production of the play must help the audience to experience the magic and the mystery of the story.

REMIND the Set Designer:
The stage must not be cluttered. The set must be simple and easy to move. The effect I'd like is one of a dreamlike, timeless world that is sacred and magical.

Prop List

- cradleboard
- bush (pomme blanche)
- snake
- basket of meat
- bow and arrow
- 10 medicine bundles
- ball shot full of arrows

Review with Props Designer



To: The Director

From: The Set Designer

Here is my preliminary sketch for the set. As you suggested, it is spare. The ground cloth can be raised by poles to create shapes that remind us of hills and teepees. The tree has a perch for actors to sit on. I hope to make the branches move so that the tree can appear to be growing. In addition, I am collaborating with the lighting designer to figure out if we can use shadow puppets to project important shapes (such as the bird, a web, and the gaming wheel) on the sun and teepee. What do you think?

S. D. - 685
SCENIC DESIGNER
SIGNATURE

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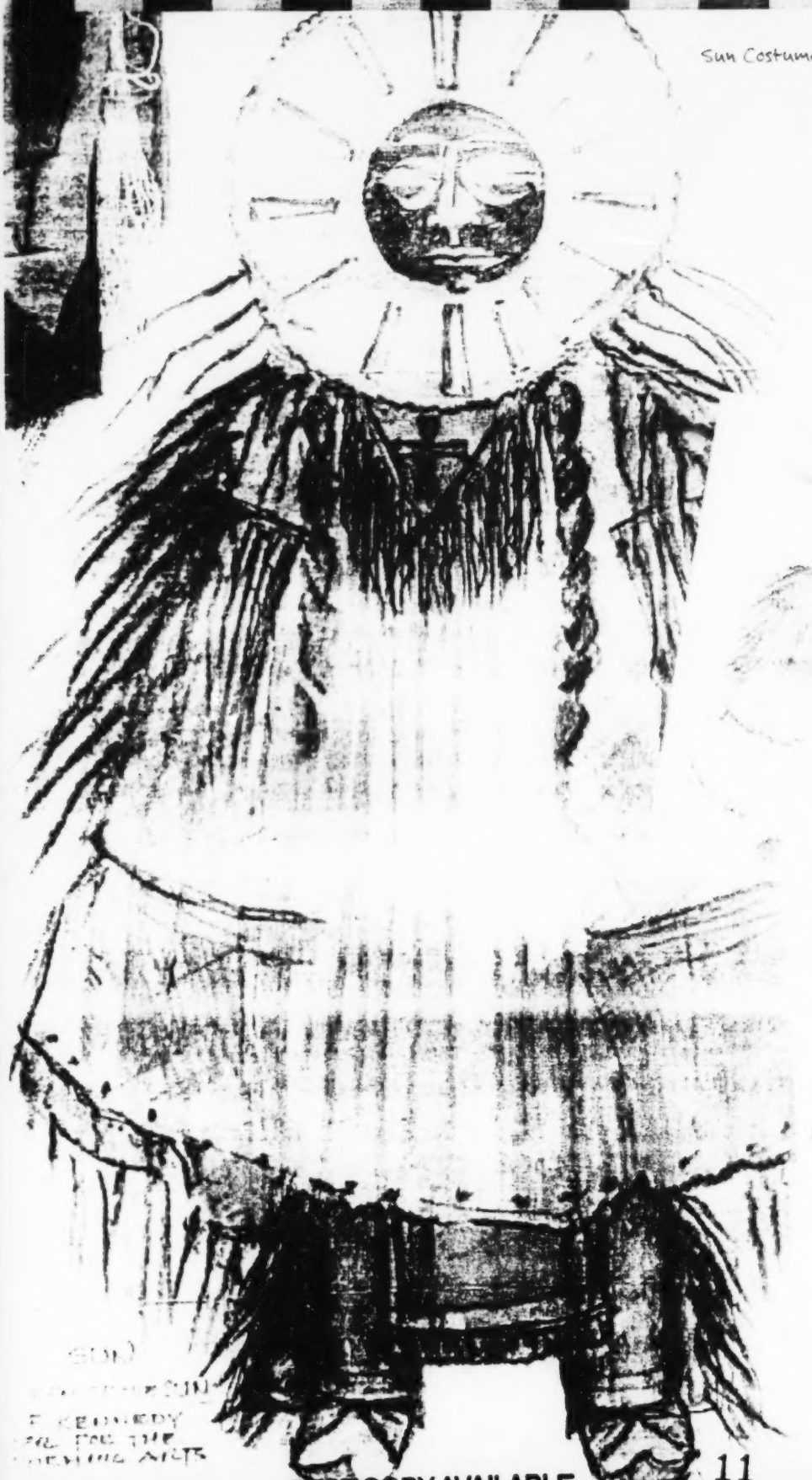

Sun Costume

Bird costume is worn over Sun costume

From The Director

Reminder:
I think one actor can double as the Sun and the bird. The other actors will have to double also. Check with costume designer.

Double—in many plays one person takes (doubles in more than one part. "Doubling" allows the director to use fewer actors.

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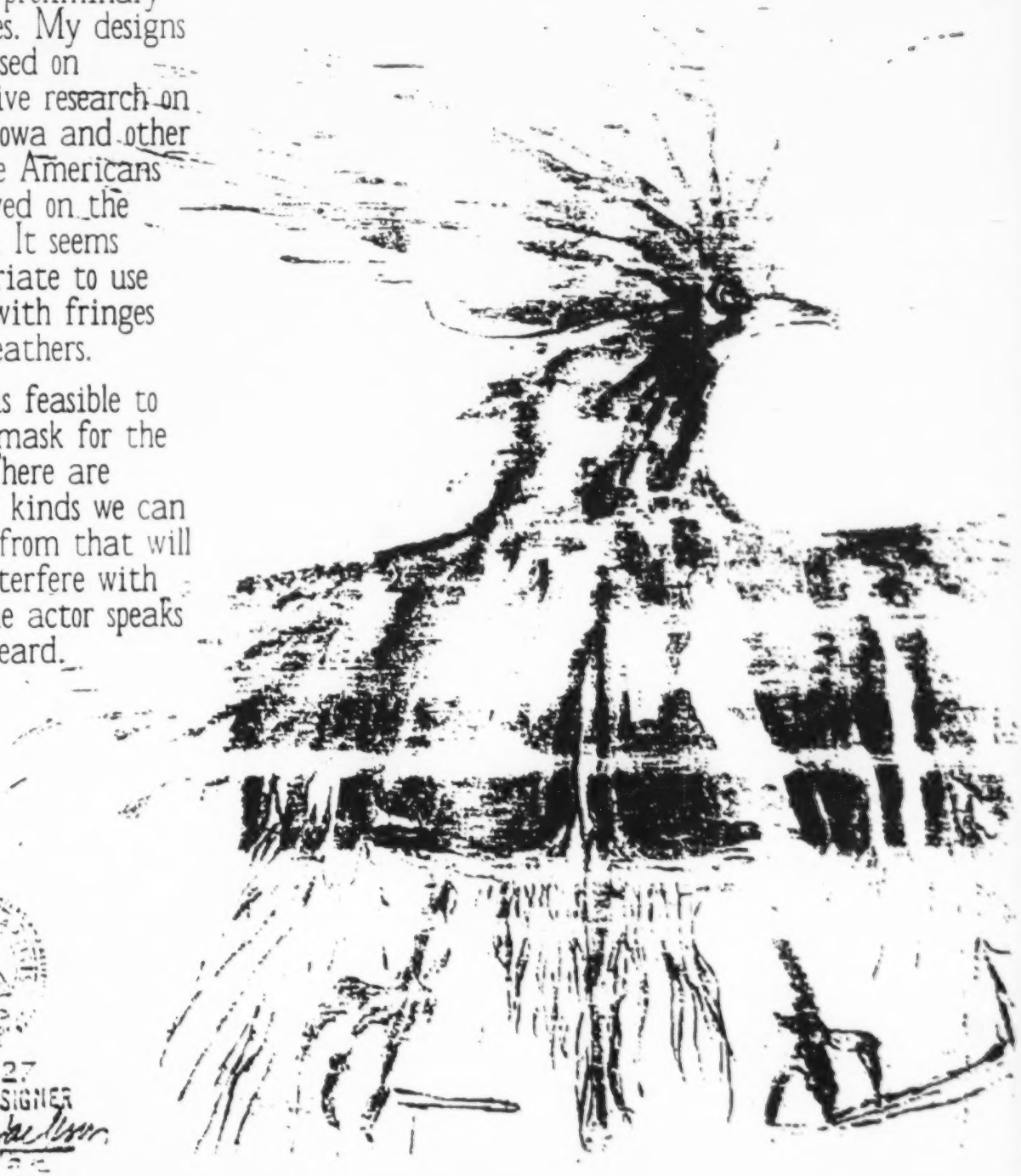
To: The Director

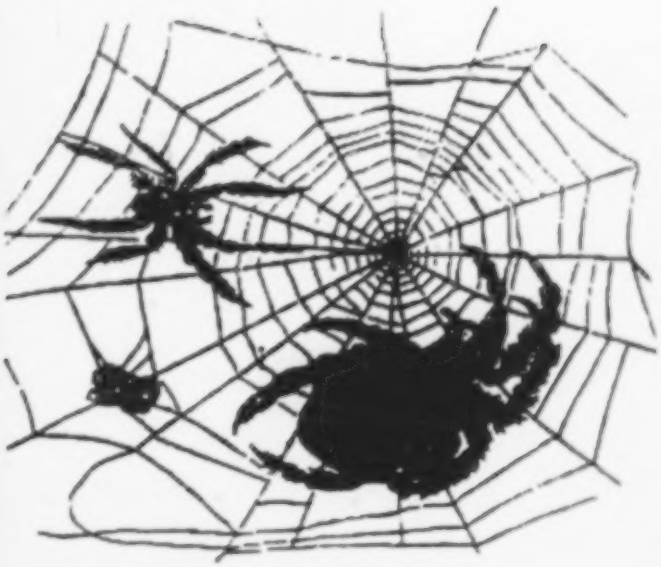
From: The Costume Designer

1) Included are some of my preliminary sketches. My designs are based on extensive research on the Kiowa and other Native Americans who lived on the Plains. It seems appropriate to use hides with fringes and feathers.

2) It is feasible to use a mask for the Sun. There are several kinds we can choose from that will not interfere with how the actor speaks or is heard.



3) I'm experimenting with something especially imaginative for Grandmother Spider. She needs to be "webby."



RED BIRD
FRONT VIEW
CAPE OVER
THE SUN PONCHO
CHILDREN OF THE SUN

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12 The Audience

From The Director

To: Editor of Performance Program

The audience's role in theater is an important aspect of our performance. Please use this article in the program.

Why not also recommend the following books for people who want to know more about the Kiowa.

Brye, Maurice. Kiowa Voices: Myths, Legends, and Folktales. College Station, Texas: Texas A & M Press, 1983.

Mayhall, Mildred. The Kiowa. Norman, Ok: Oklahoma University of Oklahoma Press, 1962.

The Final Collaborators: The Audience

Theater is a collaborative art. This means that it requires the work of many people: playwrights, directors, designers, actors, and the final collaborators — the audience. The audience is an important part of every live theater performance.

Plays require audiences to observe the action on stage carefully. That means listening to and observing the actors; observing the sets, lighting, and costumes; and watching the action for clues about the story.

Remember, live theater is different from television and the movies. You and the actors are in the same room. Actors must move precisely, and must time their lines and reactions carefully. Actors can be distracted by inappropriate movement or talking in the audience. Any unexpected activity in the audience can destroy the actors' concentration.

Help the actors by watching and listening carefully. The other members of the audience will also appreciate your thoughtful attention during the performance.

Watch. Listen. Think. Imagine. Enjoy your collaboration in *Children of the Sun*.

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Children of the Sun
by N. Scott Momaday
Meir Z. Ribalow, *Director*
R. Carlos Nakai, *Composer*
Michael S. Philips, *Set Designer*
Suzanne Jackson, *Costume Designer*
Martha Mountain, *Lighting Designer*
Elaine Randolph, *Stage Manager*
Dreama Greaves, *Props Designer/ Artisan*

Cuesheet Executive Editors: Lynne B. Silverstein and John C. Carr. *Writer:* Mikie M. Waterfall. *Design:* Paul Dupree Communications. *Special Thanks to:* N. Scott Momaday, playwright, Meir Z. Ribalow, director.

Cuesheet is funded in part through the support of the U.S. Department of Education, The Kennedy Center Corporate Fund, and The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation.

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